Strategy Research Project

AIR SOVEREIGNTY ALERT: AMERICA'S SECURITY BLANKET

BY

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This paper takes a critical look at the requirements to continue the air sovereignty alert mission.

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ABSTRACT

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Air sovereignty alert is the modern day continental air defense (AD) mission that was originally developed to combat the Cold War Soviet manned bomber nuclear threat. The invention of the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile all but alleviated the need for Air Defense mission and the resulting drawdown in forces during the 1970-80's prompted Gen Collin Powell to recommend the AD mission be cancelled or severely reduced. Today, in the wake of the 9-11 terrorist attacks, the 24/7 alert mission is accomplished by general-purpose fighters with no additional force structure or manpower. Dual tasking the fighter wings and their manpower is having detrimental effects on the force and this practice cannot be maintained. This near term issue is having long term implications on the status of the fighter force and the ability to provide forces forward to the combatant commanders.

This paper takes a critical look at the requirements to continue the air sovereignty alert mission.

AIR SOVEREIGNTY ALERT: AMERICA'S SECURITY BLANKET

When Americans think of Homeland Defense, they think of the events of September 11, 2001 and the four hijacked aircraft that attempted to destroy iconic symbols of western civilization. Three of the hijacked aircraft were successful; two were able to raze the twin towers of the World Trade Center and several surrounding buildings, a third was successful in damaging the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia. The fourth hijacked aircraft's mission was foiled by the passengers who attempted to regain control from their abductors which eventually crashed into a farm field in Pennsylvania. The media reported on the most prominent force capable of protecting America from such an attack and displayed images of U.S. fighter aircraft flying combat air patrols (CAPs) and escorting the President and Air Force One safely back to Washington D.C. These images provide a false sense of security to the American public regarding the active protection of the homeland.

The National Strategy for Homeland Security states, "Our first and most solemn obligation is to protect the American people."[1] President George W. Bush expands the scope of this statement when he wrote, "…homeland security must be a responsibility shared across our entire nation. As we further develop a national culture of preparedness, our local, tribal, state and federal governments, faith-based and community organizations, and businesses must be partners in securing the homeland."[2] The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) utilizes the capabilities of many organizations to meet its obligations. The DHS relies on the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) to accomplish the aerospace control mission who in turn

relies on the Air Force to provide fighter aircraft as a part of its protection and risk management framework in the defense of U.S. interests.

The air sovereignty alert (ASA) mission is all that remains of the continental air defense mission so prevalent during the cold war. The Air Force continues to provide minimal support as the requirement to fulfill this mission continues to wane. No one is willing to publicly announce that the fighter assets that protect the homeland from attack are not necessary; however, actions speak louder than words when one looks into the funding supporting this mission. The Department of Homeland Security along with NORAD may argue that ASA is an absolutely necessary mission, but their requirement for forces is paid out of the bottom line Air Force budget at the expense of other Air Force programs.

Aerospace Defense of the United States

The continental air defense mission with its dedicated force, evolved as a direct result of the growth of the Soviet long-range bomber fleet in the post-World War II environment and the detonation of a Soviet atomic bomb in 1949. NORAD was established on 12 May 1958 to alert North America about Soviet long range bombers attacking over the North Pole.[3] NORAD is a bi-national United States and Canadian organization charged with the missions of aerospace warning and aerospace control of North America. “NORAD uses a network of satellites, ground-based radar, airborne radar, and fighters to detect, intercept and, if necessary, engage any air-breathing threat to North America.”[4] NORAD’s control of U.S. fighter forces began to diminish as the threat from the Soviet Union long-range bomber fleet all but vanished in the 1970s and

‘80s, as it was replaced with intercontinental and sea-based ballistic missile systems (ICBM).

This reduction in threat prompted General Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1993, to recommend the number of Air National Guard (ANG) units dedicated to the air defense mission be sharply reduced or eliminated. He believed the mission could be accomplished by dual tasking general-purpose fighter squadrons in the Air Force, Navy and Marines.[5] Reductions in the defense budget caused this reassessment of risk, pointing to the peace-time force’s ability to accomplish air defense while training for the “away fight.” General Powell’s recommendation made it into the Fiscal Year 1995 Program Objective Memorandum (FY95 POM). This action resulted in further reductions in the number of fighters dedicated to the air defense mission to a total of 14 jets at seven locations around the Continental United States (CONUS) by September 11, 2001.[6]

The risk of attack to the CONUS was perceived to be very low in 1993 and the Department of Defense (DoD) was willing to accept further reductions in the combat fighter force from a 26 ½ Fighter Wing Equivalent (FWE) to a 20 FWE fighting force. Of note, the forces dedicated to training and the air defense mission of the United States, did not count against the 26 ½ FWE expeditionary force. Many Pentagon insiders considered a force of 20 fighter wing equivalents was the minimum required to support two simultaneous regional conflicts, but not capable of also supporting the defense of the CONUS.[7] By rolling the air defense mission into the general-purpose fighter force structure, the DoD essentially accepted the responsibility of covering three regional conflicts concurrently with a 20 FWE force; covering two expeditionary regional

conflicts, and protecting the United States from attack at home. These actions would have unexpected consequences within less than a decade of going into effect.

General Powell originally envisioned the joint force, in-line with the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, shouldering the responsibility of homeland defense. However, embedding the air defense mission into the general-purpose force structure did not follow his recommendation completely as the Air Force assumed responsibility while the Navy and Marine fighters were excluded from the air defense mission.[8] The Air Force saw this as a perfect reserve component mission and primarily provided ANG forces to meet the air defense mission requirements of NORAD. The only expeditionary requirements being placed on the combat forces concurrently supporting CONUS defense were Operation Southern Watch and Operation Northern Watch where fighters were patrolling the no-fly zones in Iraq, enforcing United Nations' sanctions.

In the days prior to September 11, 2001 (9-11), NORAD executed control of the seven alert sites with armed fighters on call. During this time, ANG units were able to utilize the alert aircraft for training on a case by case basis when one of the air defense sectors would allow a unit to come off alert status for a few hours to accomplish ready aircrew program requirements (a.k.a. training sorties). This ad hoc training opportunity was not optimal, but allowed alert units to achieve general-purpose training requirements while dedicating aircraft and aircrews to the alert mission.

This posture changed dramatically post 9-11, as combat air patrols (CAP) were ordered over major cities and national assets to provide continuous airborne protection of high value potential targets. The CAPs were a part of Operation Noble Eagle (ONE) and included fighters from active and reserve component forces. The combat air patrols

of ONE required aircraft to be airborne 24/7 and the mission was supported with fighters, air refueling tankers, and ground crews. ONE was a very expensive response to protect America's infrastructure from another 9-11 style attack and although it is still accomplished today, most of the force maintains a standby alert posture. NORADs control of ASA fighters grew to 18 sites in the CONUS, Hawaii and Alaska. However, the practice of allowing alert fighters to temporarily conduct training missions was discontinued completely.

Shortly after 9-11, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) began as U.S. forces initiated attacks in Afghanistan to disrupt the rule of the Taliban and their support of Al Qaida. Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) began in 2003 to oust the dictatorial rule of Saddam Hussein and stop his potential proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom and Air Sovereignty Alert were putting demands on the reserve component to the extent that they were no longer referred to as a strategic reserve, but rather an operational reserve, and more recently, an operational force. This paradigm shift of how our air reserve forces support the active component has come about after 17 years of continuous voluntary support of our military operations conducted in the Southwest Asia area of responsibility.

Homeland Defense Today

The United States enjoys several layers of protection from an outside aggressor nation: forward basing of U.S. military forces, the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans; Canada, a long time ally to the North; the most powerful Navy in the world; and a network of land, sea, and space based radars capable of detecting and monitoring the movement of air and sea surface platforms. Embedded in these layers are the assets capable of

intercepting and possibly engaging any air-breathing threat that penetrates our sovereign airspace. These assets include fighter aircraft and ground or sea based surface to air missile (SAM) systems.

The fighter assets offer a capability that the SAM systems do not, the ability to visually identify (VID) possible threats. These fighters were at their highest numerical levels in the 1960s as the threat of Soviet bombers loomed just over the North Pole. Since then, the threat to the sovereign airspace of North America has dramatically reduced; first, with the Soviet transition to Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles; second, their subsequent demise as a world super power, thus reducing their ability to threaten the United States and its allies. With this reduction in threat, so has the number of fighters dedicated to the primary role of air defense been reduced.

It is important to note that many people associate the air sovereignty alert mission with the events of 9-11. While the fighters were alerted, scrambled and subsequently given instructions to intercept the hijacked aircraft, none of the fighters were given the order to shoot them down; instead they were ordered to identify the aircraft by “type and tail.”[9] The order to identify by type and tail is standard operating procedure during any intercept when the intentions of the suspect aircraft are not known. Prior to 9-11, the accepted and taught method of dealing with a hijacked aircraft by the airlines was to initially give into the demands of the hijackers, find a safe place to land, and allow the negotiators or special teams to take over the handling of the situation with the idea that most if not all persons on board would be saved in the end.[10] In hind sight, negotiation was out of the question on 9-11; but it only took Americans 77 minutes to adapt to this new style of hijacking. 77 minutes was the time it took the

passengers of United Flight 93 to learn of the fate of the other hijacked aircraft and decide to take matters into their own hands by trying to take back control of the aircraft. In the end, the airliner crashed into a field in southern Pennsylvania instead of its intended target. Since the actions of the passengers of Flight 93, several disturbances have taken place on U.S. airliners and the reaction of the passengers has been the same; they immediately banded together to subdue the unruly person, thus allowing the flight to land safely.

President George W. Bush, reacting to the events of 9-11, called for the creation of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to improve the security of America's transportation system. The 107th Congress passed the Aviation and Transportation Security Act on November 19, 2001 giving the TSA three mandates:

- Responsibility for security of all modes of transportation
- Recruit, assess, hire, train and deploy security officers for 450 locations
- Provide 100% security screening of luggage for explosives

The TSA was subsequently moved under the control of the Department of Homeland Security after the passage of the Homeland Security Act of 2002. The TSA is made up of 43,000 security officers, inspectors, directors, air marshals and managers that work with other security agencies to ensure the safety of the American transportation system. Some of the steps the TSA utilizes to protect the transportation system includes: canine explosive detection, crew member self-defense training, arming security officers and allowing law enforcement officers to fly armed whether they are on duty or off. [11]

Providing an additional layer of defense in the aviation industry is the mandatory use of hardened cockpit doors by all airlines, the arming of active crew members inside

the flight deck (known as the Federal Flight Deck Officer Program) and the increased use of the Federal Air Marshal program. In the event that an act of air piracy or criminal violence were to endanger the crew or passengers, these precautions ensure that the threat will be met with overwhelming force or alleviated all together.[12] The TSA acknowledges the increased use of the federal air marshal and admits that every flight does not have an air marshal on board, but they do not release the percentage of flights protected. This keeps any possible threat guessing about his probability of success on any given flight.

Of more recent concern to the defense of the United States is the threat of attack by a cruise missile. These threats vary from any unmanned drone, to a sophisticated Land Attack Cruise Missile (LACM) capable of carrying a conventional or nuclear warhead. The LACM is capable of flying at high sub-sonic speeds at low altitude, has a very small radar cross section (stealth-like technology), and utilizes a navigation system that allows it to fly a circuitous route taking advantage of direct and indirect terrain masking, thus potentially avoiding early detection by radar. Although tactical ranges of LACM's vary from 100 to 1500 nautical miles, they are reliant on a launch platform such as a ship, submarine or aircraft to get them close to their intended target.[13]

The Strategy for Homeland Defense and Civil Support recognizes the need to mitigate the threat of cruise missiles and mandates, "The Department of Defense will devote significant attention to defending the U.S. territory against cruise missile attacks." The strategy recognizes the inherent difficulty in tracking and identifying cruise missiles and acknowledges DoD's efforts in developing a deployable air and cruise missile defense capabilities of designated areas.[14] The wording within the strategy

quietly recognizes the limitations of our current alert fighter force in locating, intercepting and interdicting cruise missiles when the strategy calls for further development of deployable defense capabilities. The problem the strategy recognizes is the vast coastline and land mass of the United States and the porous defenses that are in place. For example; assuming a cruise missile is launched from its host platform off the coast of the United States, it will have a 120nm head start towards its target assuming it is traveling at .8 Mach and the alert fighters are on 15 minute alert posture before they are required to be airborne. The initial starting point of the fighter relative to the threat is the first step of a possible successful intercept. The Pacific coast of the continental United States is 1293 statute miles (sm) long and is protected by three alert facilities, the Gulf coast is 1631sm and protected by three alert facilities, and the Atlantic coast is 2069sm long protected by six alert facilities (the Gulf and Atlantic coasts share one alert site in southern Florida).[15] Making a simple assumption in the worst case scenario where a cruise missile's profile charted a course between the two sites of New Orleans, LA and Homestead, FL, the alerted fighters would have to overcome approximately 440sm of offset from their shared midpoint. The probability of success of interdicting the missile in this type of scenario is very low if one is relying on alert fighters. This example is meant to demonstrate the complex problem that exists and any expectation of a successful interdiction may be unrealistic with the current number of fighter aircraft dedicated to the air sovereignty alert mission.

Homeland Defense Roles and Missions

One key to understanding the difference between homeland security and homeland defense is defining the roles and missions of each. The Homeland Security

Council defines homeland security as, "…a concerted national effort to prevent terrorist attacks within the United States, reduce America's vulnerability to terrorism, and minimize the damage and recover from the attacks that do occur."[16] In the Strategy for Homeland Defense and Civil Support, the DoD defines homeland defense as, "… the protection of U.S. sovereignty, territory, domestic population, and critical defense infrastructure against external threats and aggression, or other threats as directed by the President. The Department of Defense is responsible for homeland defense." The DoD further delineates its responsibilities by stating, "The Department of Defense does not have the assigned responsibility to stop terrorists from coming across our borders, to stop terrorists from coming through U.S. ports, or to stop terrorists from hijacking aircraft inside or outside the United States (these responsibilities belong to the Department of Homeland Security). Nor does the DoD have the authority to seek out and arrest terrorists in the United States (these responsibilities belong to the Department of Justice)."[17]

The DoD focuses on deterring and defeating direct attacks against the United States. NORAD provides the integrated system for surveillance and defense against air threats at all altitudes. NORAD also works with the Federal Aviation Administration to integrate domestic radar coverage and conduct Operation Noble Eagle CAPs protecting national assets through a network of air, sea and ground based assets. Land forces and the Coast Guard are capable of responding rapidly against threats to domestic targets and exercising maritime responsibilities under domestic and international laws. This allows the DoD to support U.S. freedom of action and secure U.S. rights and obligations by protecting the United States at a safe distance. [18] The DoD mobilized on 9-11 to

intercept the hijacked aircraft and defend against further attacks in accordance with its strategy. However, the alert posture has not subsided after the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security, TSA and the other actions taken which were organized to mitigate threats within the air and ground transportation departments of the United States.

Analysis

The debate continues about the relevancy of the ASA mission and the responsibility for supplying the forces required to meet NORAD's needs. One could conclude that it is the mission of the Air National Guard (ANG) to protect the homeland. However, that is not the construct of our guard forces. The Army or Air Force controls the federal dollars required to train and equip our reserve component forces. It is therefore the responsibility of the services to ensure the requirements of the combatant commanders are being met and the services allocate forces to accomplish the mission. Most of our Air National Guard forces are traditional reservists required to train 15 days a year plus one weekend a month. If more is required of their service, they must be put on orders or mobilized, essentially turning them into full-time soldiers and airmen.

The Air Force stepped forward as the primary service responsible for air sovereignty alert, and has depended on the ANG as the primary provider for fighter aircraft dedicated to a 24/7 alert status. However, the Air Force has not provided the necessary funding to meet the requirements set forth by NORAD and Northern Command (NORTHCOM) and elects to partially fund this mission on a bi-annual basis. Further complicating the issue is the fact that the fighter wing's manpower and force structure are required to support homeland defense, and the its expeditionary combat

mission concurrently; a doctrinally incorrect procedure which dates back to General Colin Powell's direction to have general-purpose units accomplish the air sovereignty alert mission.

The bi-annual funding the Air Force provides to support the ASA mission creates problems within the reserve component because of a lack of job security and the continual underfunding of the manpower positions. This has required the National Guard Bureau (NGB) to resource the shortfall. In FY 06/07, ASA was underfunded by 122 positions (Air Combat Command made up the difference with man-days). In FY08/09, ASA was underfunded by 150 positions and the shortfall was corrected with man-days and a supplemental from congress.[19]

The extra Fully Mission Capable (FMC) aircraft that each unit is required to produce 24/7 to meet the demands of alert is taking a toll on the force structure left to support unit general-purpose training and the utilization rate of the those remaining aircraft has increased. Many units have been struggling to meet their training requirements and as a result, the NGB waived some of the requirements in 2008, essentially reducing training opportunities. This is a slippery slope the NGB is engaging in by lowering the requirements, so that it can meet the requirements. Where does it stop, and what is the "real" requirement to have a mission capable war fighter?

The root of the funding problem lies in the lack of support the Air Force gives to the ASA mission. The cause lies in the reality that ASA is not a core mission. The Air Force is trying to meet the needs of NORAD and NORTHCOM on the cheap. By dual tasking the general-purpose forces, the Air Force is accepting risk in the number of available fighters to accomplish the expeditionary combat mission.

The 1085 required personnel that support the ASA mission at 16 reserve component locations do not know if their fulltime job will be continued past the two year funding cycle. The work force utilized to support this mission is found in the traditional guardsman pool at each location. These airmen are assigned to an expeditionary combat job skill, but have been put on 24 month orders in support of ASA (which conflicts with their expeditionary combat job responsibilities). On the surface, this may look like a prudent use of manpower by utilizing economies of scale; but in reality, the Air Force is accepting risk by assigning one airman two jobs.[20]

Utilizing the workforce assigned to an expeditionary combat unit to support a homeland defense mission has not proved to be devastating to the ability to generate forces, yet! The National Guard Bureau A-3 directorate has been able to assign forces as backfill to the ASA mission when a dual tasked unit is required to support its expeditionary combat role. However, should the combatant commander need additional forces in theater, this backfill may not be available to support ASA. In this scenario, the NORTHCOM commander would be competing for forces with the combatant commander, even though the combat plans and doc statements have the forces assigned to the combatant commander. During a period of low usage, this overlapping mission is definitely doable; however, when our forces are called to action, NORTHCOM or the expeditionary combatant command will be forced to do without.

The RAND Corporation was commissioned to look at alternatives to the CAPs being executed as part of Operation Noble Eagle after the attacks of 9-11. Their work was completed and briefed to the Air Force in February 2002 while the CAPs were still being flown over major U.S. cities. RAND estimated the cost of these CAPs at $500M

per month and their findings showed that aircraft on strip alert could be just as effective as the CAPs, but at a much lower cost to the DoD. “RAND recommended that the Air Force end the post 9-11 practice of continuous fighter jet patrols over U.S. cities and instead leave fighters on strip alert at airfields, ready to launch in case of emergency.”[21] RAND feels as though this work influenced Air Force thinking as the CAPs were reduced soon after the report was delivered.[22]

As part of Program Budget Decision (PDB) 727 in December 2003, the Air Force submitted a Budget Change Proposal (BCP) requesting the funding for 24/7 CAPs (Operation Noble Eagle contingency operations) be reprogrammed into a permanent ASA funding line in the FY06-FY11 Future Years Defense Plan (FYDP) (the recommended change to an air sovereignty alert mission allowed aircraft to execute strip alert instead of being airborne 24/7 when flying ONE CAPs). The PBD also requested that, “the sites be staffed with dedicated aircraft and personnel allowing the ANG to assume the ASA mission and provide a steady state alert posture with fully equipped squadrons.” The Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) approved the request and directed the Air Force to pursue long-term funding for ASA in the next FYDP. [23] The Air Force reprogrammed the Operation Noble Eagle contingency operation money, but failed to fund ASA with it and the offset was absorbed into other Air Force programs. Follow the money, and one will find the real priorities.

In an effort to rectify the funding problems for the ASA mission, Congressman Frank A. LoBiondo of New Jersey offered an amendment to House Resolution 5658 (National Defense Authorization Act 2009 (NDAA 2009)) in May 2008 requesting the inclusion of the ASA mission into the baseline of the Air Force budget and

recommending full funding to cover personnel, equipment and aircraft resources.[24] This amendment did not make it into the final publication of the NDAA, but sec. 1070 could be construed as the "catch all" for defense needs. It states, "It is the sense of Congress that the defense requirements of the United States should be based upon a comprehensive national security strategy and fully funded to counter present and emerging threats."[25] Sec. 1070 seems to be an ambiguous statement that could justify funding everything and nothing at the same time.

Assigning the ASA mission to general-purpose F-15 and F-16 units saved the DoD hundreds of millions of dollars by utilizing the economies of effort by tapping into the skills and capabilities of general-purpose fighter units. The dual tasking of the air defense mission along with the expeditionary mission saved the Air Force Operation and Maintenance (O&M) costs. However, if you consider the fact that this action was accomplished within the current force structure, the O&M savings would be a "wash" with the correct application of manpower to the ASA mission and the resulting increase of 1085 Active Guard and Reserve (AGR) personnel to the ANG's end strength.

Today, we continue to be engaged in the counter insurgency operations of Iraq and the continued effort to root out Al Qaida in Afghanistan at a high cost to our combat forces, systems and materiel. The DoD recognizes the need to reconstitute our forces and equipment while planning for future upgrades in the midst of an economy in recession and a shrinking budget. Programs are being reduced, postponed or completely cut to ensure the needs of the services will fit within the constraints of the budget allowed by congress.

While the United States continues to use its fighter force in Iraq, Afghanistan and at home, the DoD is demanding force structure reductions in the FY08 and FY10 POM. The reduction in the Air Force fighter force is an effort to gain offsets to pay for new technologies without having to raise the baseline of the defense budget. One could argue the benefits of this during a peace dividend; however, the three main areas of responsibility our fighter forces are currently engaged in put a strain on our remaining force structure. This may be a risk that we cannot afford to take. The statements presented here are not new and the implications of proceeding as planned are all too obvious. Many have raised concerns about the path the Air Force and DoD are taking, but none more recognized and respected than General Barry R. McCaffrey, USA (ret) when he states in his after action report in August 2007:

> The U.S. Air Force is our primary national strategic force. Yet it is too small, has inadequate numbers of aging aircraft, has been marginalized in the current strategic debate, and has mortgaged its modernization program to allow the diversion of funds to prosecute an inadequately Congressionally supported war in Iraq and Afghanistan.
>
> Furthermore:
>
> The U.S. Air Force is badly underfunded, its manpower is being drastically cut and diverted to support of counter-insurgency operations, its modernization program of paradigm shifting technology is anemic--- and its aging strike, lift, and tanker fleets are being ground down by non-stop global operations with an inadequate air fleet and maintenance capabilities.[26]

General John M. Shalikashvili's (Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff) Joint Vision 2010 laid the foundation for the Air Force to design, build and acquire the most technologically advanced fighters in the world when he stated, "…and leverage technological opportunities to achieve new levels of effectiveness in joint war fighting"; describing the conceptual template for his vision.[27] Since Joint Vision 2010 was

published in 1996, the AF has procured 183 F-22's; hundreds fewer than originally planned. The F-35 is slated for production cuts before the first one has rolled off the assembly line. Technology has a price, and it looks like the DoD got the proverbial cart before the horse when it continues to pursue fielding these fighters, even though the budget does not support acquiring the numbers of aircraft originally envisioned.

Programs within the Air Force are continuing to be cut in order to provide offsets to fund these new airframes. In the FY10 POM, the AF is retiring approximately 25% of its fighter force structure early to reap the benefits of O&M savings. This reduction of force structure comes during a time when procurement of replacement aircraft is a fraction of what was originally planned. The problem lies in numbers of available aircraft to accomplish the mission. The reserve component is reducing their Primary Aircraft Assigned (PAA) by three PAA or 17%, and converting units to new missions to meet the rest of the cuts. The active Air Force has elected to keep PAA constant at their fighter units, but close entire squadrons to meet their share in the reduction of fighter assets. With fewer fighter assets available, the combatant commanders will have to determine the best fielding of those forces whether at home or abroad, but probably not both.[28]

The real issue is requirements. The Department of Homeland Security is responsible for protecting the United States and the DoD is responsible for defending U.S. interests at home and abroad. Until the DoD embraces the ASA mission as a long term requirement in support of DHS, by assigning the force structure and personnel to the mission, we will continue to put our forces at risk by not supporting them with the equipment, training and funding required to meet the needs of the mission.

Recommendation

ASA is a mission in search of a threat, and since the decline of the Soviet Union, the dedicated force structure to protect the sovereignty of the airspace over the United States has also declined. What began as an opportunity to save O&M dollars, by reducing force structure and theoretically accomplishing two missions inside of a one mission construct, has eroded the combat capability of our active and reserve component forces.

The ASA mission provides the United States and Canada a defensive force able to protect North America from potential airborne threats and proponents of the mission will argue that the events of 9-11 further justify supporting the mission. However, opponents will argue that ASA is a holdover mission from the cold war and that there is not a realistic threat that an alert fighter is going to be able to influence and the events of 9-11 merely gave supporters of the mission one last opportunity to save it. If actions speak louder than words, then the lack of funding, the lack of support, and the further reduction in the fighter force structure to offset the cost of future procurements does not communicate a message of support for the ASA mission. Supporting the ASA mission half-heartedly only undermines the needs of the Air Force and requires sacrifices by other programs to support a mission that is not a part of the baseline budget. The ASA mission should be cancelled before it further erodes the combat effectiveness of our expeditionary forces.

However, if the Department of Homeland Security along with NORAD and NORTHCOM feel as though their needs are best met by having fighters on alert, they should champion for ASA and demand that a dedicated force be put in place to support

their needs instead of relying on the Air Force to provide forces on an ad hoc bi-annual basis.

In this case the Air Force should follow through with the PBD 727 recommendation to transition to a steady state alert posture and include the funding in the baseline throughout the FYDP. Dedicated personnel and force structure would be available to meet the needs of NORAD and NORTHCOM without sacrificing the force structure and training the combatant commanders expect. This would allow the alert sites to be staffed with dedicated aircraft and personnel relieving the strain on the units of having to support an ASA mission while continuing to fulfill their expeditionary combat responsibilities.[29]

The common construct of the reserve component forces is 18 fighter squadron ready aircraft. For the units additionally tasked with ASA, three PAA should be added to their force structure. The additional aircraft would be available if the reduction in the fighter force is executed in the FY10 POM with no additional acquisitions required. Along with the force structure, a unit tasking document supporting the mission should be developed accounting for the increased manpower required to execute the ASA mission. Unity of effort can still be realized as General Colin Powell envisioned as the maintenance and back shop support would be available at the host unit.

Under the current construct, the mission at home or away will eventually fail. We must align our forces to best meet the needs of the American public in defense of our nation. In a time of reduced budgets, we will have to make the hard decisions to determine what is required and let go of any mission that does not add value to the

defense of our nation. If ASA is not worth supporting, we must not allow it to put our expeditionary combat requirements at increased risk.

Endnotes

[1] Homeland Security Council, *National Strategy for Homeland Security*, (Washington, DC: Homeland Security Council, October 2007), 1.

[2] George W. Bush, letter in *National Strategy for Homeland Security* (Washington DC: White House, October 5, 2007).

[3] U.S. Government Accounting Office, *Continental Air Defense: A dedicated force is no longer needed*, Report to Congressional Committees (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Accounting Office, May 3, 1994) http://www.fas.org/man/gao/gao9476.htm (accessed November 10, 2008), Appendix 1.

[4] "About NORAD," *North American Aerospace Defense Command* web site, http://www.norad.mil/about/index.html (accessed November 10, 2008).

[5] U.S. Government Accounting Office, *Continental Air Defense*, Introduction.

[6] Adam Hebert, "Ongoing Operations Made NORAD Response to Sept. 11 'Seamless'" *Inside the Air Force*, Dec 21, 2001, in Christopher Bolkom, *Homeland Security: Defending U.S. Airspace*, CRS Report for Congress, RS21394, (Washington, DC: U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, Updated June 6, 2006),1, http://www.law.umaryland.edu/marshall/crsreports/crsdocuments/RS21394_06062006.pdf (accessed Nov 10, 2008).

[7] U.S. Government Accounting Office, *Continental Air Defense*, 2. This information was widely known and debated during the FY95 POM and subsequent years, but the lack of a perceived national threat at the time led to the acceptance of this risk and the fighter force was combined to include the homeland air defense mission as a subset of the general-purpose expeditionary mission.

[8] Ibid.

[9] National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9-11 Commission Report: Executive Summary*, http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report_Exec.pdf (accessed Feb 28, 2009), 8.

[10] Author's personal experience as part of training received as a commercial airline pilot in 1998. He flew Boeing 737's on routes across North and South America.

[11] "Who We Are," *Transportation Security Agency* website http://www.tsa.gov/research/tribute/history.shtm (accessed February 21, 2009).

[12] "What We Do," *Transportation Security Agency* website, http://www.tsa.gov/lawenforcement/programs/fams.shtm (accessed February 21, 2009)

[13] National Air Intelligence Center NAIC, “Ballistic and Cruise Missile Threat: Land Attack Cruise Missiles,” http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/missile/naic/part07.htm (accessed March 13, 2009).

[14] Ibid.

[15] “Coastline of the United States,” http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0001801.html (accessed March 22, 2009).

[16] Homeland Security Council, *National Strategy for Homeland Security*, 3.

[17] U.S. Department of Defense, *Strategy for Homeland Defense and Civil Support*, (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Defense, June 2005), 5.

[18] Ibid., 12.

[19] Major Eugene White, NGB/A8PC, *NGB Air Sovereignty Alert (ASA) Funding Issues*, BBP (Arlington, VA: National Guard Bureau, Feb 8, 2008). Major White is the Program Element Monitor (PEM) for ASA at the National Guard Bureau, Arlington, VA.

[20] Author’s personal experience at the National Guard Bureau as a F-16 Program Element Monitor for all general-purpose, air defense, training and test F-16 aircraft in the Air National Guard. He was responsible for developing the Air National Guard F-16 budget and determining force structure and monetary initiatives and offsets required to meet the balance budget directive during the FY10 Program Objective Memorandum.

[21] RAND Corporation, *Saving the Government Money: A New Approach to Protecting U.S. Air Space* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2005), 3.

[22] Ibid.

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[24] Frank A. LoBiondo, *Sense of Congress that Air Sovereignty Alert Mission Should Receive Sufficient Funding and Resources*, Amendment to H.R. 5658, Sec. 10__ (Washington DC, May 13, 2008).

[25] U.S. Congress, House, National Defense Authorization Act 2009, 110th Cong., 2nd sess, (June 3, 2008), http://www.opencongress.org/bill/110-h5658/text (accessed January 25, 2009).

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[28] Author’s personal experience at the National Guard Bureau as the F-16 Program Element Monitor for the FY10 Program Objective Memorandum.

[29] U. S. Department of Defense, Program Budget Decision 727, 2.